



DELEUZE & GUATTARI

CAPITALISM

A VERY SPECIAL DELIRIUM



UNDERNEATH ALL REASON
LIES DELIRIUM, DRIFT.

PÉTROLEUSE PRESS

les pétroleuses were the unsavory bitches of the paris commune whose 'love of riot' burnt paris to the ground.
pétroleuse press is a riot-loving feminist collective in brooklyn saving up for our own offset printing press.
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but what about your father? No, he isn't Chinese? Then, do you have a Chinese lover?" It's at the same level of repressive work as the judge in the Angela Davis case who affirmed: "Her behavior can only be explained by her being in love." And what if, on the contrary, Angela Davis's libido was a social, revolutionary libido? What if she were in love because she was a revolutionary?

That is what we want to say to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts: you don't know what delirium is; you haven't understood anything. If our book has a meaning, it is that we have reached a stage where many people feel the psychoanalytic machine no longer works, where a whole generation is getting fed up with all-purpose schemas – Oedipus and castration, imaginary and symbolic – which systematically efface the social, political, and cultural contents of any psychic disturbance.

Q: You associate schizophrenia with capitalism; it is the very foundation of your book. Are there cases of schizophrenia in other societies?

FG: Schizophrenia is indissociable from the capitalist system, itself conceived as primary leakage [fuite]: and exclusive malady. In other societies, escape and marginalization take on other aspects. The asocial individual of so-called primitive societies is not locked up. The prison and the asylum are recent notions. One chases him, he is exiled at the edge of the village and dies of it, unless he is integrated to a neighboring village. Besides, each system has its particular sickness: the hysteric of so-called primitive societies, the manic-depressive paranoiacs of the great empires... The capitalist economy precedes by decoding and deterritorialization: it has its extreme cases, i.e., schizophrenics who decode and deterritorialize themselves to the limit; but also it has its extreme consequences – revolutionaries.

QUESTION: When you describe capitalism, you say: "There isn't the slightest operation, the slightest industrial or financial mechanism that does not reveal the dementia of the capitalist machine and the pathological character of its rationality (not at all a false rationality, but a true rationality of *this* pathology, of *this madness*, for the machine does work, be sure of it). There is no danger of this machine going mad, it has been mad from the beginning and that's where its rationality comes from. Does this mean that after this "abnormal" society, or outside of it, there can be a "normal" society?

GILLES DELEUZE: We do not use the terms "normal" or "abnormal." All societies are rational and irrational at the same time. They are perforce rational in their mechanisms, their cogs and wheels, their connecting systems, and even by the place they assign to the irrational. Yet all this presupposes codes or axioms which are not the products of chance, but which are not intrinsically rational either. It's like theology: everything about it is rational if you accept sin, immaculate conception, incarnation. Reason is always a region cut out of the irrational – not sheltered from the irrational at all, but a region traversed by the irrational and defined only by a certain type of relation between irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, drift.

Everything is rational in capitalism, except capital or capitalism itself. The stock market is certainly rational; one can understand it, study it, the capitalists know how to use it, and yet it is completely delirious, it's mad. It is in this sense that we say: the rational is always the rationality of an irrational. Something that hasn't been adequately discussed about Marx's *Capital* is the extent to which he is fascinated by capitalist mechanisms, precisely because the system is demented, yet works very well at the same time.

So what is rational in a society? It is – the interests being defined in the framework of this society – the way people pursue those interests, their realization. But down below, there are desires, investments of desire that cannot be confused with the investments of interest, and on which interests depend in their determination and distribution: an enormous flux, all kinds of libidinal-unconscious flows that make up the delirium of this society. The true story is the history of desire. A capitalist, or today's technocrat, does not desire in the same way as a slave merchant or official of the ancient Chinese empire would. That people in a society desire repression, both for others and *for themselves*, that there are always people who want to bug others and who have the opportunity to do so, the "right" to do so, it is this that reveals the problem of a deep link between libidinal desire and

the social domain. A “disinterested” love for the oppressive machine: Nietzsche said some beautiful things about this permanent triumph of slaves, on how the embittered, the depressed and the weak, impose their mode of life upon us all.

Q: So what is specific to capitalism in all this?

GD: Are delirium and interest, or rather desire and reason, distributed in a completely new, particularly “abnormal” way in capitalism? I believe so. Capital, or money, is at such a level of insanity that psychiatry has but one clinical equivalent: the terminal stage. It is too complicated to describe here, but one detail should be mentioned. In other societies, there is exploitation, there are also scandals and secrets, but that is part of the “code,” there are even explicitly secret codes. With capitalism, it is very different: nothing is secret, at least in principle and according to the code (this is why capitalism is “democratic” and can “publicize” itself, even in a juridical sense). And yet nothing is admissible. Legality itself is inadmissible. By contrast to other societies, it is a regime born of the public *and* the admissible. A very special delirium inherent to the regime of money. Take what are called scandals today: newspapers talk a lot about them, some people pretend to defend themselves, others go on the attack, yet it would be hard to find anything illegal in terms of the capitalist regime. The prime minister’s tax returns, real estate deals, pressure groups, and more generally the economical and financial mechanisms of capital – in sum, everything is legal, except for little blunders, what is more, everything is public, yet nothing is admissible. If the left was “reasonable,” it would content itself with vulgarizing economic and financial mechanisms. There’s no need to publicize what is private, just make sure that what is already public is being admitted publicly. One would find oneself in a state of dementia without equivalent in the hospitals.

Instead, one talks of “ideology.” But ideology has no importance whatsoever: what matters is not ideology, not even the “economico-ideological” distinction or opposition, but the *organization of power*. Because organization of power – that is, the manner in which desire is already in the economic, in which libido invests the economic – haunts the economic and nourishes political forms of repression.

Q: So is ideology a *trompe l’oeil*?

GD: Not at all. To say “ideology is a *trompe l’oeil*,” that’s still the traditional thesis. One puts the infrastructure on one side – the economic, the serious – and on the other, the superstructure, of which ideology is a part, thus rejecting the phenomena of desire in ideology. It’s a perfect way to ignore how desire works within the infrastructure, how it invests in it, how it takes part in it, how, in this

1 *trompe l’oeil*: a style of painting in which objects are depicted with photographically realistic detail; an illusion

of this type for adult psychiatry. In the face of the present impasse, the state will try to de-nationalize institutions in favor of other institutions ruled by the law of 1901 and most certainly manipulated by political powers and reactionary family groups. We are moving toward a psychiatric surveillance of France, if the present crises fail to liberate its revolutionary potentialities. Everywhere, the most conservative ideology is in bloom, a flat transposition of the concepts of Oedipalism. In the children’s wards, one calls the director “uncle,” the nurse, “mother.” I have even heard distinctions like the following: group games obey a maternal principle, the workshops, a paternal one. The psychiatry of *Secteur* seems progressive because it opens the hospital. But if this means imposing a grid over the neighborhood, we will soon regret the loss of the closed asylums of yesterday. It’s like psychoanalysis, it functions openly, so it is all the worse, much more dangerous as a repressive force.

GD: Here’s a case. A woman arrives at a consultation. She explains that she takes tranquilizers. She asks for a glass of water. Then she speaks: “You understand I have a certain amount of culture. I have studied, I love to read, and there you have it. Now I spend all my time crying. I can’t bear the subway. And the minute I read something, I start to cry. I watch television; I see images of Vietnam: I can’t stand it ...” The doctor doesn’t say much. The woman continues: “I was in the Resistance... a bit. I was a go-between.” The doctor asks her to explain. “Well, yes, don’t you understand, doctor? I went to a cafe and I asked, for example, ‘is there something for Rene?’ I would be given a letter to pass on.” The doctor hears “Rene”; he wakes up: “Why do you say ‘Rene’?” It’s the first time he asks a question. Up to that point, she was speaking about the metro, Hiroshima, Vietnam, of the effect all that had on her body, the need to cry about it. But the doctor only asks: “Wait, wait, ‘Rene’ ... what does ‘Rene’ mean to you?” Rene – someone who is reborn?⁷ The Renaissance, this fits into a universal schema, the archetype: “You want to be reborn.” The doctor gets his bearings: at last he’s on track. And he gets her to talk about her mother and her father.

It’s an essential aspect of our book, and it’s very concrete. The psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have never paid any attention to delirium. It’s enough just to listen to someone who is delirious: it’s the Russians that worry him, the Chinese; my mouth is dry; somebody buggered me in the metro; there are germs and spermatozoa swimming everywhere; it’s Franco’s fault, the Jews, the Maoists: all a delirium of the social field. Why shouldn’t this concern the sexuality of the subject – the relations it has with the Chinese, the whites, the blacks? With civilization, the crusades, the metro? Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts hear nothing of this, on the defensive as much as they are indefensible. They crush the contents of the unconscious under prefab statements: “You speak to me of the Chinese,

7 In French, some conjugations of ‘reborn’ are pronounced the same as the name Rene.

Q: What role can still be attributed to the church in a country like ours? The church was at the center of power in Western civilization until the 18th Century, the bond and structure of the social machine until the emergence of the nation-state. Today, deprived by the technocracy of this essential function, it seems to have gone adrift, without a point of anchorage, and to have split up. One can only wonder if the church, pressured by the currents of Catholic progressivism, might not become less confessional than certain political organizations.

FG: And ecumenism⁵? In't it a way of falling back on one's feet? The church has never been stronger. There is no reason to oppose church and technocracy, there is a technocracy of the church. Historically, Christianity and positivism have always been good partners. The development of positive sciences has a Christian motor. One cannot say that the psychiatrist has replaced the priest. Nor can one say the cop has replaced the priest. There is always a use for everyone in repression. What has aged about Christianity is its ideology, not its organization of power.

Q: Let's get to this other aspect of your book: the critique of psychiatry. Can one say that France is already covered by the psychiatry of *Secteur*⁶ – and how far does this influence spread?

FG: The structure of psychiatric hospitals essentially depends on the state and the psychiatrists are mere functionaries. For a long time the state was content to practice a politics of coercion and didn't do anything for almost a century. One had to wait for the Liberation for any signs of anxiety to appear: the first psychiatric revolution, the opening of the hospitals, the free services, institutional psychotherapy. All that has led to the great utopian politics of *Secteur*, which consisted in limiting the number of internments and of sending teams of psychiatrists out into the population like missionaries in the bush. Due to lack of credit and will, the reform got bogged down: a few model services for official visits, and here or there a hospital in the most underdeveloped regions. We are now moving toward a major crisis, comparable in size to the university crisis, a disaster at all levels: facilities, training of personnel, therapy, etc.

The institutional charting of childhood is, on the contrary, undertaken with better results. In this case, the initiative has escaped the state framework and its financing to return to all sorts of associations – childhood protection or parental associations.... The establishments have proliferated, subsidized by Social Security. The child is immediately taken charge of by a network of psychologists, tagged at the age of three, and followed for life. One can expect to see solutions

⁵ ecumenism: efforts at religious unity between sects or faiths

⁶ *Secteur*: Policy dividing France into areas of 70000 inhabitants each, served by a team of healthcare workers in clinics and outpatient hospitals rather than the traditional asylum.

respect, it organizes power and the repressive system. We do not say: ideology is a trompe l'oeil (or a concept that refers to certain illusions) We say: there is no ideology, it is an illusion. That's why it suits orthodox Marxism and the Communist Party so well. Marxism has put so much emphasis on the theme of ideology to better conceal what was happening in the USSR: a new organization of repressive power. There is no ideology, there are only organizations of power once it is admitted that the organization of power is the unity of desire and the economic infrastructure.

Take two examples. Education: in May 1968 the leftists lost a lot of time insisting that professors engage in public self-criticism as agents of bourgeois ideology. It's stupid, and simply fuels the masochistic impulses of academics. The struggle against the competitive examination was abandoned for the benefit of the controversy, or the great anti-ideological public confession. In the meantime, the more conservative professors had no difficulty reorganizing their power. The problem of education is not an ideological problem, but a problem of the organization of power: it is the specificity of educational power that makes it appear to be an ideology, but it's pure illusion. Power in the primary schools, that means something, it affects all children. Second example: Christianity. The church is perfectly pleased to be treated as an ideology. This can be argued; it feeds ecumenism. But Christianity has never been an ideology; it's a very specific organization of power that has assumed diverse forms since the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages, and which was able to invent the idea of international power. It's far more important than ideology.

FELIX GUATTARI: It's the same thing in traditional political structures. One finds the old trick being played everywhere again and again: a big ideological debate in the general assembly and questions of organization reserved for special commissions. These questions appear secondary, determined by political options. While on the contrary, the real problems are those of organization, never specified or rationalized, but projected afterwards in ideological terms. There the real divisions show up: a treatment of desire and power, of investments, of group Oedipus, of group "superegos," of perverse phenomena, etc. And then political oppositions are built up: the individual takes such a position against another one, because in the scheme of organization of power, he has already chosen and hates his adversary.

Q: Your analysis is convincing in the case of the Soviet Union and of capitalism. But in the particulars? If all ideological oppositions mask, by definition, the conflicts of desire, how would you analyze, for example, the divergences of three Trotskyite groupuscules²? Of what conflict of desire can this be the result? De-

² groupuscule: a political faction of very small numbers, usually derogatory

spite the political quarrels, each group seems to fulfill the same function vis-a-vis its militants: a reassuring hierarchy, the reconstitution of a small social milieu, a final explanation of the world.... I don't see the difference.

FG: Because any resemblance to existing groups is merely fortuitous, one can well imagine one of these groups defining itself first by its fidelity to hardened positions of the communist left after the creation of the Third International. It's a whole axiomatics, down to the phonological level – the way of articulating certain words, the gesture that accompanies them – and then the structures of organization, the conception of what sort of relationships to maintain with the allies, the centrists, the adversaries... This may correspond to a certain figure of Oedipalization, a reassuring, intangible universe like that of the obsessive who loses his sense of security if one shifts the position of a single, familiar object. It's a question of reaching, through this kind of identification with recurrent figures and images, a certain type of efficiency that characterized Stalinism – except for its ideology, precisely. In other respects, one keeps the general framework of the method, but adapts oneself to it very carefully: “The enemy is the same, comrades, but the conditions have changed.” Then one has a more open groupuscule. It's a compromise: one has crossed out the first image, whilst maintaining it, and injected other notions. One multiplies meetings and training sessions, but also the external interventions. For the desiring will, there is – as Zazie says – a certain way of bugging students and militants, among others.

In the final analysis, all these groupuscules say basically the same thing. But they are radically opposed in their *style*: the definition of the leader, of propaganda, a conception of discipline, loyalty, modesty, and the asceticism of the militant. How does one account for these polarities without rummaging in the economy of desire of the social machine? From anarchists to Maoists the spread is very wide, politically as much as analytically. Without even considering the mass of people, outside the limited range of the groupuscules, who do not quite know how to distinguish between the leftist élan, the appeal of union action, revolt, hesitation of indifference...

One must explain the role of these machines... these groupuscules and their work of stacking and sifting – in crushing desire. It's a dilemma: to be broken by the social system or to be integrated in the pre-established structure of these little churches. In a way, May 1968 was an astonishing revelation. The desiring power became so accelerated that it broke up the groupuscules. These later pulled themselves together; they participated in the reordering business with the other repressive forces, the CGT, the PC, the CRS.³ I don't say this to be provocative. Of

3 Confédération Générale du Travail is the major French trade union confederation; Parti Communiste, now the Parti Communiste Français, is the electoral communist party; and the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité are the riot police

But in every respect, capitalism has a very particular character: its lines of escape are not just difficulties that arise, they are the conditions of its own operation. It is constituted by a generalized decoding of all flux, fluctuations of wealth, fluctuations of language, fluctuations of art, etc. It did not create any code, it has set up a sort of accountability, an axiomatic of decoded fluxes as the basis of its economy. It ligatures the points of escape and leaps itself having to seal new leaks at every limit. It doesn't resolve any of its fundamental problems, it can't even foresee the monetary increase in a country over a single year. It never stops crossing its own limits which keep reappearing farther away. It puts itself in alarming situations with respect to its own production, its social life, its demographics, its borders with the Third World, its internal regions, etc. Its gaps are everywhere, forever giving rise to the displaced limits of capitalism. And doubtless, the revolutionary way out (the active escape of which Jackson spoke when he said: “I don't stop running, but while running, I look for a weapon”) is not at all the same thing as other kinds of escape, the schizo-escape, the drug-escape. But it is certainly the problem of the marginalized: to plug all these lines of escape into a revolutionary plateau. In capitalism, then, these lines of escape take on a new character, a new type of revolutionary potential. You see, there is hope.

Q: You spoke just now of the crusades. For you, this is one of the first manifestations of collective schizophrenia in the West.

FG: This was, in fact, an extraordinary schizophrenic movement. Basically, in an already schismatic and troubled world, thousands and thousands of people got fed up with the life they led, makeshift preachers rose up, people deserted entire villages. It's only later that the shocked papacy tried to give direction to the movement by leading it off to the Holy Land. A double advantage: to be rid of errant bands and to reinforce Christian outposts in the Near East threatened by the Turks. This didn't always work: the Venetian Crusade wound up in Constantinople, the Children's Crusade veered off toward the South of France and very quickly lost all sympathy: there were entire villages taken and burned by these “crosses” children, who the regular armies finally had to round up. They were killed or sold into slavery.

Q: Can one find parallels with contemporary movements: communities and by-roads to escape the factory and the office? And would there be any pope to co-opt them? A Jesus Revolution?

FG: A recuperation by Christianity is not inconceivable. It is, up to a certain point, a reality in the United States, but much less so in Europe or in France. But there is already a latent return to it in the form of a Naturist tendency, the idea that one can retire from production and reconstruct a little society at a remove, as if one were not branded and hemmed in by the capitalist system.

FG: Exactly. And that's what interests us. Where do these eruptions, these uprisings, these enthusiasms come from that cannot be explained by a social rationality and that are diverted, captured by the power at the moment they are born? One cannot account for a revolutionary situation by a simple analysis of the interests of the time. In 1903, the Russian Social Democratic Party debated the alliances and organization of the proletariat, and the role of the avant-garde. While pretending to prepare for the revolution, it was suddenly shaken up by the events of 1905 and had to jump on board a moving train. There was a crystallization of desire on board a wide social scale created by a yet incomprehensible situation. Same thing in 1917. And there too, the politicians climbed on board a moving train, finally getting control of it. Yet no revolutionary tendency was able or willing to assume the need for a soviet-style organization that could permit the masses to take real charge of their interests and their desire. Instead, one put machines in circulation, so-called political organizations, that functioned on the model elaborated by Dimitrov at the Seventh International Congress – alternating between popular fronts and sectarian retractions – and that always led to the same repressive results.

We saw it in 1936, in 1945, in 1968. By their very axiomatic, these mass machines refuse to liberate revolutionary energy. It is, in an underhanded way, a politics comparable to that of the President of the Republic or of the clergy, but with red flag in hand. And we think that this corresponds to a certain position vis-a-vis desire, a profound way of envisioning the ego, the individual, the family. This raises a simple dilemma: either one finds a new type of structure that finally moves toward the fusion of collective desire and revolutionary organization: or one continues on the present path and, going from repression to repression, heads for a new fascism that makes Hitler and Mussolini look like a joke.

Q: But then what is the nature of this profound, fundamental desire which one sees as being constitutive of man and social man, but which is constantly betrayed? Why does it always invest itself in antinomic machines of the dominant machine, and yet remain so similar to it? Could this mean that desire is condemned to a pure explosion without consequence or to perpetual betrayal? I have to insist: can there ever be, one fine day in history, a collective and during expression of liberated desire, and how?

GD: If one knew, one wouldn't talk about it, one would do it. Anyway, Felix just said it: revolutionary organization must be that of the war machine and not of state apparatus, of an analyzer of desire and not an external synthesis. In every social system, there have always been lines of escape, and then also a rigidification to block off escape, or certainly (which is not the same thing) embryonic apparatuses that integrate them, that deflect or arrest them in a new system in preparation. The crusades should be analyzed from this point of view.

course, the militants courageously fought the police. But if one leaves the sphere of struggle to consider the function of desire, one must recognize that certain groupuscules approached the youth in a spirit of repression: to contain liberated desire in order to re-channel it.

Q: What is liberated desire? I certainly see how this can be translated at the level of an individual or small group: an artistic creation, or breaking windows, burning things, or even simply an orgy or letting things go to hell through laziness or vegetating. But then what? What could a collectively liberated desire be at the level of a social group? And what does this signify in relation to “the totality of society,” if you do not reject this term as Michel Foucault does.

FG: We have taken desire in one of its most critical, most acute stages: that of the schizophrenic — and the schizo that can produce something within or beyond the scope of the confined schizo, battered down with drugs and social repression. It appears to us that certain schizophrenics directly express a free deciphering of desire. But now does one conceive a collective form of the economy of desire? Certainly not at the local level. I would have a lot of difficulty imagining a small, liberated community maintaining itself against the flows of a repressive society, like the addition of individuals emancipated one by one. If, on the contrary, desire constitutes the very texture of society in its entirety, including in its mechanisms of reproduction, a movement of liberation can “crystallize” in the whole of society. In May 1968, from the first sparks to local clashes, the shake-up was brutally transmitted to the whole of society, including some groups that had nothing remotely to do with the revolutionary movement – doctors, lawyers, grocers. Yet it was vested interests that carried the day, but only after a month of burning. We are moving toward explosions of this type, yet more profound.

Q: Might there have already been a vigorous and durable liberation of desire in history, apart from brief periods: a celebration, carnage, war, or revolutionary upheavals? Or do you really believe in an end of history. after millennia of alienation, social evolution will suddenly turn around in a final revolution that will liberate desire forever?

FG: Neither the one nor the other. Neither a final end to history, nor provisional excess. All civilizations, all periods have known ends of history – this is not necessarily convincing and not necessarily liberating. As for excess, or moments of celebration, this is no more reassuring. There are militant revolutionaries who feel a sense of responsibility and say: yes excess “at the first stage of revolution,” serious things... Or desire is not liberated in simple moments of celebration. See the discussion between Victor and Foucault in the issue of *Les Temps Modernes* on the Maoists. Victor consents to excess, but at the “first stage.” As for the rest, as for the real thing, Victor calls for a new apparatus of state, new norms, a popular

justice with a tribunal, a legal process external to the masses, a third party capable of resolving contradictions among the masses. One always finds the old schema: the detachment of a pseudo-avant-garde capable of bringing about syntheses, of forming a party as an embryo of state apparatus, of drawing out a well brought up, well educated working class; and the rest is a residue, a lumpen-proletariat one should always mistrust (the same old condemnation of desire).

But these distinctions themselves are another way of trapping desire for the advantage of a bureaucratic caste. Foucault reacts by denouncing the third party, saying that if there is popular justice, it does not issue from a tribunal. He shows very well that the distinction “avant-garde-lumpen-proletariat” is first of all a distinction introduced by the bourgeoisie to the masses, and therefore serves to crush the phenomena of desire, to *marginalize* desire. The whole question is that of state apparatus. It would be strange to rely on a party or state apparatus for the liberation of desire. To want better justice is like wanting better judges, better cops, better bosses, a cleaner France, etc. And then we are told: how would you unify isolated struggles without a party? How do you make the machine work without a state apparatus? It is evident that a revolution requires a war machine, but this is not a state apparatus, it is also certain that it requires an instance of analysis, an analysis of the desires of the masses, yet this is not an apparatus external to the synthesis. Liberated desire means that desire escapes the impasse of private fantasy: it is not a question of adapting it, socializing it, disciplining it, but of connecting it in such a way that its process not be interrupted in the social body, and that its expression be collective. What counts is not the authoritarian unification, but rather a sort of infinite spreading: desire in the schools, the factories, the neighborhoods, the nursery schools, the prisons, etc. It is not a question of directing, of totalizing, but of plugging into the same plan of oscillation. As long as one alternates between the impotent spontaneity of anarchy and the bureaucratic and hierarchic coding of a party organization, there is no liberation of desire.

Q: In the beginning, was capitalism able to assume the social desires?

GD: Of course, capitalism was and remains a formidable desiring machine. The monetary flux, the means of production, of manpower, of new markets, all that is the flow of desire. It's enough to consider the sum of contingencies at the origin of capitalism to see to what degree it has been a crossroads of desires, and that its infrastructure, even its economy, was inseparable from the phenomena of desire. And fascism too – one must say that it has “assumed the social desires,” including the desires of repression and death. People got hard-ons for Hitler, for the beautiful fascist machine.

But if your question means: was capitalism revolutionary in its beginnings, has the industrial revolution ever coincided with a social revolution? No, I don't think so. Capitalism has been tied from its birth to a savage repressiveness; it had its organization of power and its state apparatus from the start. Did capitalism imply a dissolution of the previous social codes and powers? Certainly. But it had already established its wheels of power, including its power of state, in the fissures of previous regimes. It is always like that: things are not so progressive; even before a social formation is established, its instruments of exploitation and repression are already there, still turning in the vacuum, but ready to work at full capacity. The first capitalists are like waiting birds of prey. They wait for their meeting with the worker, the one who drops through the cracks of the preceding system. It is even, in every sense, what one calls primitive accumulation.

Q: On the contrary, I think that the rising bourgeoisie imagined and prepared its revolution throughout the Enlightenment. From its point of view, it was a revolutionary class “to the bitter end,” since it had shaken up the *ancien régime*⁴ and swept into power. Whatever parallel movements took place among the peasantry and in the suburbs, the bourgeois revolution is a revolution made by the bourgeoisie – the terms are hardly distinguishable – and to judge it in the name of 19th or 20th century socialist utopias introduces, by anachronism, a category that did not exist.

GD: Here again, what you say fits a certain Marxist schema. At one point in history, the bourgeoisie was revolutionary, it was even necessary – necessary to pass through a stage of capitalism, through a bourgeois revolutionary stage. It's a Stalinist point of view, but you can't take that seriously. When a social formation exhausts itself, draining out of every gap, all sorts of things decode themselves, all sorts of uncontrolled flows start pouring out, like the peasant migrations in feudal Europe, the phenomenon of “deterritorialization.” The bourgeoisie imposes a new code, both economic and political, so that one can believe it was a revolution. Not at all. Daniel Guerin has said some profound things about the revolution of 1789. The bourgeoisie never had illusions about who its real enemy was. Its real enemy was not the previous system, but what escaped the previous systems's control, and what the bourgeoisie strove to master in its turn. It too owed its power to the ruin of the old system, but this power could only be exercised insofar as it opposed everything else that was in rebellion against the old system. The bourgeoisie has never been revolutionary. It simply made sure others pulled off the revolution for it. It manipulated, channeled, and repressed an enormous surge of popular desire. The people were finally beaten down at Valmy.

Q: They were certainly beaten down at Verdun.

4 *ancien régime*: the French “old regime” of the 14th-18th Century